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Housekeeper's Chat

Wed., Nov., 23/27

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "A 4-H Club Girl Sets the Holiday Table." Menu and recipes from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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We have promised to let Mary Anne set the holiday table tomorrow. She likes to help get a company meal. She is particularly interested in the Thanksgiving dinner, because two of her young 4-H club friends have been invited. And Brother Ben will be home from college. Of course Mary Anne wants her big brother to see how attractively she can arrange the Thanksgiving table.

This morning she polished all the silver, and glassware, and bought some flowers. She is going to use the silver flower bowl, and the four silver candlesticks.

Mary Anne will set the table about an hour before dinner time, to get this task off her mind, and give her time to rearrange the decorations, if necessary. Besides, if the table is set 50 or 60 minutes before dinner is served, there is time to make sure that "everything is on." You know how embarrassing it is, to discover, at the last minute, that the salad forks have been forgotten.

First, Mary Anne will place a silence cloth on the table. Over this she will lay the best linen tablecloth, perfectly straight, with the crease in the exact middle of the table, from head to foot. In the center of the table she will place the silver flower bowl, with its dark-red, and gold, and burnt-orange chrysanthemums. The four silver candlesticks flank the flower bowl. The yellow candles are tall enough that the light will not shine in the eyes of the guests.

The service plates and the silver are placed about one inch from the edge of the table. Knives to the right, with the cutting edge toward the plate; spoons to the right, bowl up; and forks to the left. The water glasses are placed to the right, above the knife. Bread-and-butter plates, with the butter spreader on the plate, go to the left, and salts and peppers between every two places. The two pretty bonbon dishes will hold salted nuts.

When Mary Anne gets this far in her table-setting, she will stand off and survey her work with a critical eye. There! She has forgotten the napkins - or the serviettes - as Ben calls them. The napkins, or the serviettes, are placed to the left. Now everything seems to be quite all right. The tablecloth is perfectly straight. It has been ironed so carefully that the flower design fairly gleams. Silverware, china, and glassware, sparkle. Mary Anne has followed the rule of good table setting. The table is not over-crowded, and everything on it has a purpose. Mary Anne has learned that simplicity is the guiding factor in table-setting, and she avoids elaborate decorations.

"Mother", calls Mary Anne, "now you can come and see it". Her mother comes in from the kitchen, where she is busy giving the turkey its final basting. "Charming," says Mary Anne's mother. "Are you sure the salts and peppers are full, Mary?"

"Certainly," says Mary. "There's only more thing I'd like to have on the table. Do you suppose I'd have time to make some very simple place cards, like those we had at the 4-H club banquet? I know they aren't exactly necessary, but they would look pretty."

Of course Mary Anne's mother knows that place cards are not necessary, especially at an informal dinner, where everybody knows everybody else. But still, if the child wants to make place cards, it's all right with her mother. Mary Anne takes much more interest in her home, if she is allowed to make suggestions, and carry out her own ideas.

Now we shall take leave of Mary Anne, with best wishes for the success of her Thanksgiving dinner.

But today is today, and we must have dinner tonight, as well as tomorrow. Tonight's dinner is planned especially for the young collegian, home for the holidays. He gets in just before dinner. You'll recognize him by the gaudy labels on his suitcase, and by the swaggerish way he wears his hat. He may be carrying a cane this time -- you never can tell. But you can be sure of one thing -- as soon as the greetings are over, he'll rush to the kitchen.

"Cheerio!" exclaims the young collegian, "Fried Oysters, and Baked Potatoes! Harvard Beets, and Lemon Pie! Three rahs for the old home cooking, and I don't mean maybe!"

Pretty soon everybody sits down to dinner, and the young collegian tells what he's been doing at college. He has had some thrilling experiences. If I didn't feel it my moral duty to broadcast two recipes, I'd relate the young collegian's adventures, at the old Aggie college.

But work must come first, and here are the directions for Fried Oysters: First, select nice large oysters. Drain the oysters, and look them over carefully, for small pieces of shell. Have ready some finely sifted, stale, bread-crumbs, seasoned with salt and a little pepper. Dip each oyster in a well-beaten egg, to which 1 tablespoon of cold water has been added, and then roll the oyster in the seasoned crumbs. Now, place the oysters on a pan, or board, and allow them to stand, until the egg and bread coating has hardened.

The next step is to heat any desired fat, in an iron kettle, until the fat is hot enough to brown a bread crumb in 40 seconds. Then carefully place the oysters, a few at a time, in a wire basket, lower them slowly into the fat, and cook until they are a golden brown. As you remove the oysters from the kettle, put them on paper, to absorb the excess grease. Keep the oysters hot until all are ready to serve.

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The second recipe is for Harvard Beets, which one radio friend describes as "utterly delicious". Five ingredients, for Harvard Beets:

6 medium-sized beets	1/2 cup vinegar, and
1/2 cup sugar	2 tablespoons butter
1/2 tablespoon cornstarch	

Let's check the five ingredients: (Repeat)

Wash the beets, and cook them in boiling water until tender. Remove the skins, and cut the beets into thin slices or cubes. Mix the sugar and the cornstarch. Add the vinegar, and let the sauce boil for 5 minutes, stirring constantly. Just as the sauce is taken from the fire, add the butter. Pour the sauce over the beets. Let them stand on the back of the stove for a few minutes, so that the beets may absorb the sweet-sour flavor of the sauce.

Let's repeat the menu, please: Fried Oysters, Baked Potatoes, Harvard Beets, and Lemon Pie.

